

Case Number:	CM14-0204681		
Date Assigned:	12/16/2014	Date of Injury:	03/26/2014
Decision Date:	02/11/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/20/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/08/2014

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Orthopedic Surgery, has a subspecialty in Sports Medicine and is licensed to practice in California. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The expert reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

The injured worker is a 65-year-old male who reported cumulative trauma on 03/26/2014. The mechanism of injury was unspecified. His diagnoses include status post bilateral carpal tunnel release with persistent carpal tunnel syndrome, bilateral trigger middle finger, and bilateral elbow lateral epicondylitis. Past treatments include surgery and physical therapy. His pertinent surgical history included a bilateral carpal tunnel release and bilateral trigger middle finger release. On 11/03/2014, the injured worker complained of bilateral hand pain, numbness, weakness, and locking of the middle finger. The physical examination findings revealed a positive Tinel's sign, positive Phalen's test, and positive median nerve compression of the bilateral wrists. The injured worker was indicated to have hand grip weakness bilaterally. It was also noted the injured worker had tenderness to the bilateral elbows, lateral epicondyle, and positive provocative test for lateral epicondylitis. Relevant medications were not provided. The treatment plan included a revision left carpal tunnel release, left trigger middle finger release, preoperative clearance, and 12 sessions of physical therapy for the bilateral trigger middle fingers and bilateral elbows, and a PTP followup evaluation. A rationale was not provided. A Request for Authorization form was received 12/05/2014.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

**Revision Left Carpal Tunnel Release As Well As Left Trigger Middle Finger Release:
Overturned**

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 11 Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Complaints Page(s): 270-271.

Decision rationale: The request for revision left carpal tunnel release, as well as left trigger middle finger release is medically necessary. According to the California MTUS/ACOEM Guidelines, endoscopic carpal tunnel release seems to be an effective procedure compared to open surgery; however, great emphasis must be given to surgeons to avoid major complications such as median nerve injuries. In addition, the California MTUS/ACOEM Guidelines indicate that 1 or 2 injections of lidocaine and corticosteroids into or near the thickened area of the flexor tendon sheath of the affected finger for trigger finger are almost always sufficient to cure symptoms and restore function. Procedure under local anesthesia may be necessary to permanently correct persistent triggering. The injured worker was indicated to have undergone a previous bilateral carpal tunnel release with no relief of pain. Based on documented functional deficits after failure of conservative management and cortisone injections, the request for a revision left carpal tunnel release, as well as a left trigger middle finger release would be supported by the evidence based guidelines. As such, the request is medically necessary.

Preoperative Clearance: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Since the primary procedure is not medically necessary, the associated services are not medically necessary.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back, Preoperative testing, general.

Decision rationale: The request for preoperative clearance is not medically necessary. According to the Official Disability Guidelines, preoperative testing is performed before surgical procedures to help stratify risk, direct anesthetic choices, and guide postoperative management, but are often obtained because of protocol rather than medical necessity. The criteria for ordering preoperative testing should include the patient's clinical history, comorbidities, physical examinations, and risk factors such as active cardiovascular disease should be evaluated. There was lack of documentation to indicate the injured worker had an active cardiovascular disease for signs or symptoms indicating such. Therefore, the request is not supported by the evidence based guidelines. As such, the request is not medically necessary.

12 PT Sessions (Bilateral Trigger Middle Finger, Bilateral Elbow): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Since the primary procedure is not medically necessary, the associated services are not medically necessary.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine Page(s): 98-99, Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 22.

Decision rationale: The request for 12 PT sessions for the bilateral middle fingers is not medically necessary. According to the California MTUS Postsurgical Guidelines, physical therapy treatment for postsurgical treatment of trigger finger is allotted 9 physical therapy sessions. However, the request exceeds the number of sessions recommended by the guidelines. As such, the request is not supported. The request for 12 physical therapy sessions for the bilateral elbows would be allotted 8 to 10 physical therapy sessions for indications of neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis. However, there was lack of objective functional deficits in regard to motor strength and range of motion to indicate medical necessity for physical therapy of the bilateral elbows. In addition, the request exceeds the number of sessions recommended by the guidelines. As such, the request for 12 PT sessions (Bilateral Trigger Middle Finger, Bilateral Elbow) is not supported in its entirety and is not medically necessary.

PTP Follow-Up Evaluation: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Forearm, Wrist and Hand, Office visits.

Decision rationale: The request for PTP follow-up evaluation is medically necessary. According to the Official Disability Guidelines, office visits are determined to be medically necessary for evaluation and management of injured workers and play a critical role in the proper diagnosis and return to function should be encouraged. Furthermore, the determination is also based on what medication the patient is taking and upon the review of the patient's concerns, signs and symptoms, clinical stability, and reasonable physician judgment. As the patient is indicated to have been supported for a revision left carpal tunnel release, as well as a left trigger middle finger release, the PTP follow-up evaluation would be supported by the evidence based guidelines. As such, the request is medically necessary.